

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BOGOTA 03951 01 OF 02 292219Z
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 /056 W
-----292310Z 066665 /75

P R 292112Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1275
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS
USSOUTHCOM
AMCONSUL CALI
AMCONSUL BARRANQUILLA
AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BOGOTA 3951

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: IINT, CO
SUBJECT: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY. POTENTIAL PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES REGAINED THE NEWS SPOTLIGHT AS THEY CONTINUED THEIR QUEST FOR SUPPORT. RUMORS CIRCULATED CONCERNING THE ATTEMPTED RESIGNATION OF THE FINANCE MINISTER. MAY DAY DEMONSTRATIONS WILL HIT AT INFLATION, AND RAISE THE POSSIBILITY OF A FUTURE GENERAL STRIKE. A MILITARY CAMP WAS HIT BY THE ELN IN RURAL AREA, WHILE THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY CLOSED FOR TEN DAYS TO ALLOW CONSIDERATION OF MEANS TO CONTROL STUDENT VIOLENCE. END SUMMARY.

2. PRESIDENTIAL CONTENDERS CONTINUE THEIR BATTLES WITH THE COMPLETION OF THE SPECIAL SESSION OF CONGRESS, PUBLIC ATTENTION REFOCUSED ON THE ONGOING BATTLES FOR THE SELECTION OF POSSIBLE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES. THIS REFLECTS AN APPARENT INCREASED
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BOGOTA 03951 01 OF 02 292219Z

EFFORT BY THE POTENTIAL CANDIDATES TO SOLICIT SUPPORT, AND TO ATTACK THEIR OPPONENTS. IN A CONTINUATION OF THE ACRIMONOUS DEBATES OF THE SPECIAL SESSION, SUPPORTERS OF LIBERAL PARTY CANDIDATE JULIO CESAR TURBAY AYALA LEVELLED CHARGES THAT ANOTHER OF THE PARTY'S CANDIDATES, CARLOS LLERAS, ENTERED INTO A PACT WITH THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY'S OSPINA-

PASTRANA FORCES TO OPPOSE THE GOVERNMENT AND ELECT LLERAS AS THE NEXT PRESIDENT. THESE CHARGES, BASED PRIMARILY ON A VENEZUELAN TELEVISION INTERVIEW STATEMENT BY BERTHA HERNANDEZ DE OSPINA THAT SHE COULD SUPPORT LLERAS AS PRESIDENT, WERE VIGOROUSLY DENIED BY BOTH LLERIST AND OSPINA SPOKESMEN. IN SUPPORT OF THIS DENIAL DONA BERTHA ON APRIL 28, GAVE AN INDIRECT INDICATION THAT THE OSPINA-PASTRANA FORCES MIGHT ACCEPT BELISARIO BETANCUR AS THE COMPROMISE CANDIDATE OF A UNITED CONSERVATIVE PARTY. THE POSSIBILITY OF A LLERIST-OSPINA ALLIANCE IS UNLIKELY EVEN IF THERE IS AN APPARENT CONVERGENCE OF INTERESTS BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS OVER OPPOSITION TO THE LOPEZ GOVERNMENT.

3. FINANCE MINISTER'S ATTEMPTED RESIGNATION REPORTED. PERSISTENT REPORTS CIRCULATED THAT FINANCE MINISTER ABDON ESPINOSA HAD OFFERED HIS RESIGNATION TO PRESIDENT LOPEZ LATE LAST WEEK BUT THAT LOPEZ, AFTER SOME THOUGHT, HAD REJECTED IT. ACCORDING TO THESE REPORTS, THE MINISTER, UPSET BY INCREASING CRITICISM OF HIS POLICIES, HAD BEGUN TO DRINK HEAVILY, AND ON A PUBLIC OCCASION HAD BEHAVED OFFENSIVELY. LOPEZ, HEARING THIS, HAD REPROVED ESPINOSA WHO THEREUPON TENDERED HIS RESIGNATION. AT FIRST, LOPEZ WAS INCLINED TO ACCEPT THE RESIGNATION AND TO APPOINT CONSERVATIVE MIGUEL URRUTIA, MINISTER OF MINES, AS ESPINOSA'S REPLACEMENT BUT HAD SECOND THOUGHTS AND DECIDED TO KEEP ESPINOSA ON. COMMENT. THE DIFFICULT AND COMPLEX ECONOMIC

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BOGOTA 03951 01 OF 02 292219Z

SITUATION AND THE CRITICISM OF ESPINOSA'S MANAGEMENT IS LIKELY TO CONTINUE. IT IS NOT CLEAR HOW THE COMBINATION OF THE MINISTER'S UNEVEN ECONOMIC SKILLS AND HIS ARROGANT, QUARRELSOME PERSONALITY WILL MEET THE TEST.

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BOGOTA 03951 02 OF 02 292155Z
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 /056 W

-----292311Z 065584 /75

P R 292112Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1276
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS
USSOUTHCOM
AMCONSUL MEDELLIN
AMCONSUL CALI
AMCONSUL BARRANQUILLA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BOGOTA 3951

4. MAY DAY DEMONSTRATIONS PLANNED. ALL OF THE
VARIOUS NATIONAL TRADE UNION CENTERS PLANNED TO USE
MAY DAY CELEBRATIONS AS A MEANS OF SHOWING WORKER
DISSATISFACTION OVER CONTINUING COST OF LIVING
INCREASES. DEMOCRATIC UNION CENTERS FOCUSED ON THE
NEED FOR IMMEDIATE GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO DOUBLE
THE MINIMUM WAGE AND CONTROL PRICES. TULIO CUEVAS,
THE PRESIDENT OF THE LARGEST CONFEDERATION,
THE UNION OF COLOMBIAN WORKERS (UTC),
HELD A PRESS CONFERENCE APRIL 28 IN WHICH HE RAISED
THE POSSIBILITY OF A GENERAL STRIKE TO FORCE THE
GOC INTO ACTION IF REAL WAGES CONTINUE TO FALL.
WHILE THE THREAT OF SUCH A STRIKE MAY BE DISCOUNTED
AS SIMPLE MAY DAY RHETORIC, IT DOES INDICATE THE
RISING LEVEL OF TRADE UNION UNEASINESS OVER INFLA-
TION AND THE PRESSURES THE UNIONS FACE WITH THE
DETERIORATION OF RANK AND FILE LIVING STANDARDS.
LEFT-WING UNION GROUPS, ALLIED WITH THE COMMUNIST
PARTY AND WITH RADICAL STUDENT GROUPS, WILL FOCUS
THEIR PROTESTS ON PRESIDENT LOPEZ PERSONALLY,
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BOGOTA 03951 02 OF 02 292155Z

PARTICULARLY AS THE AUTHOR OF THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC
PROBLEMS CONFRONTING WORKERS. WHILE DEMONSTRATIONS
BY THESE GROUPS IN RECENT MONTHS HAVE BEEN
WITHOUT INCIDENT, THE TEMPORARY CLOSING OF
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY (SEE BELOW) MAY CAUSE
STUDENT GROUPS TO USE THIS OCCASION FOR MORE
VIOLENT PROTEST. SECURITY UNITS, HOWEVER,
ARE EXPECTED TO BE OUT IN FORCE
OVER THE WEEKEND. VARIOUS CULTURAL AND
SPORTS EVENTS HAVE BEEN SCHEDULED BY THE
NATIONAL AND CITY GOVERNMENTS, AND THESE
MAY ATTRACT CROWDS WHICH MIGHT NORMALLY
ATTEND THE PROTEST MEETINGS.

5. PUBLIC ORDER. RURAL GUERRILLAS, BELIEVED TO BE MEMBERS OF THE CUBAN-LINE ELN, CONDUCTED A SURPRISE ATTACK AT DAWN ON APRIL 23 AGAINST A COLOMBIAN ARMY DETACHMENT CAMPED IN AN ISOLATED AREA OF ANTIOQUIA DEPARTMENT. TWO SOLDIERS WERE KILLED IN THE ATTACK AND A NUMBER WERE WOUNDED. ACCORDING TO GENERAL (RET.) ALVARO VALENCIA TOVAR, THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME IN 20 YEARS THAT GUERRILLAS HAD ATTACKED AN ARMY DETACHMENT, ALTHOUGH ATTACKS ON THE LESS WELL-TRAINED POLICE ARE RELATIVELY COMMON. MEANWHILE, IN BOGOTA, OFFICIALS OF THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY ANNOUNCED THE FORMAL CLOSURE OF THE INSTITUTION'S BOGOTA CAMPUS UNTIL MAY 9. ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES HAD ALREADY COME TO A NEAR HALT THE PREVIOUS WEEK AS A RESULT OF STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS AND A PROFESSORS' STRIKE PROTESTING THE PRESENCE OF POLICE ON CAMPUS. THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE POLICE UNITS EARLIER THIS WEEK REMOVED THE MOST VISIBLE PROVOCATION, BUT UNIVERSITY AUTHORITIES, AWARE THAT STUDENT ACTIVISTS

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BOGOTA 03951 02 OF 02 292155Z

WILL READILY FIND NEW EXCUSES FOR PROTEST, ARE REPORTEDLY CONSIDERING NEW MEASURES TO REDUCE THE LIKELIHOOD OF FURTHER DISRUPTIONS WHEN THE UNIVERSITY REOPENS.

DREXLER

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, POLITICAL SUMMARIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 29-Apr-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BOGOTA03951
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770151-0128
Format: TEL
From: BOGOTA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t1977046/aaaaaest.tel
Line Count: 204
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 3940b2a5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11-Jan-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2814663
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA
TAGS: PINT, ECON, CO
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/3940b2a5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009